

## OPEN LETTERS.

### Is publication of botanical and zoological papers in microscopical Journals Justifiable?

In the October GAZETTE in the column of "Notes and News," is this statement: "Botany and zoology are becoming badly entangled again with 'microscopy.' As something that deals with methods, the latter has an important place; as dealing with botanical and zoological results, it is out of its domain." Why the author of this paragraph makes use of the word "again" is difficult to see, for there has certainly been abatement neither in the recent nor in the remote past in the use of microscopical journals and proceedings for publication of biological papers. Indeed so far as my acquaintance with these journals goes there has been a steady increase of material such as the GAZETTE deems out of its proper place.

Is such publication justified by precedents? It is due the American Microscopical Society to say that it is by no means the first nor the only nor by any means the chief sinner in this respect. If the practice of putting biological papers into journals bearing a title indicating only that they are *microscopical* journals is to be condemned, then the leading English, American, and German microscopical periodicals at once become missionary fields for the GAZETTE note-writer.

A perusal of the following periodicals will show that papers dealing with botanical and zoological results predominate in all, and in some predominate almost exclusively. Other equally reputable titles might be added but this seems hardly necessary. Quarterly Journal of Microscopical Science, Journal of the Royal Microscopical Society, Journal of the New York Microscopical Society, Journal of Microscopy, American Monthly Microscopical Journal, Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Mikroskopie, Zeitschrift für angewandte Mikroskopie.

Is such publication justified by necessity? It might be urged that these organizations should all change the titles of their publication. It would of course be impossible to limit them at once to methods as the writer suggests. The difficulty I take it is chiefly in the name. But who can suggest a better name for these organizations? Many have tried and have fallen back on their old name. The name any way plays a very insignificant part in the question as compared with the importance of having zoological and botanical subjects brought into the meetings. It is, it seems to me, very desirable to cultivate a taste for investigation in natural science in the minds of members of these societies. It is one of the most effective propaganda of which I know. It must be remembered that there are many workers now in biology in America and we know very well that the GAZETTE cannot give space to all the articles it would. Other botanical journals find their columns unequal to the demand for space. Every year the volume of matter published upon biological subjects increases. With this increase the labor of investigating increases but this should never be allowed to discourage the publication of investigations. It is a neces-

sity both from the point of view of the investigator and from the point of view of the increasing multitude of readers that channels of publication should increase. Few of these channels have a more definite function to perform than the American Microscopical Society. Whether it is efficient in performing that function those who read its pages are alone able to tell. Its co-laborer, the GAZETTE, will be the last I am sure to discourage it in its mission.—W. W. ROWLEE, *Cornell University*.

#### Nature of the binary name.

In the January issue of the GAZETTE Professor Bailey has urged against the essential permanency of the specific name an argument of so much originality as to be worthy of careful consideration. He presented the same idea some five years since,<sup>1</sup> and I remember then regarding it as an argument needing to be answered; yet I do not recall having read anywhere a word of comment upon it. The gist of the Professor's argument lies in these two interrogations: "Is nomenclature monomial or binomial? Is *bullata* or *Carex bullata* the name of a sedge?" The two forms of expression are, of course, but the abstract and the concrete, respectively, of one thought. In other words, the query is but one; and its strength as an argument resides in the perfect confidence with which a certain one of two conceivable answers is expected. The propounder of this forceful question appears firmly to believe that any and every botanist gifted with ordinary human intelligence must answer: "*Carex bullata* undoubtedly, and not merely *bullata*, is the name of a certain sedge." If this be, what Professor Bailey so confidently believes it, the only rational answer; if it be the correct answer, the argument is strong enough utterly to discredit the practice of treating the retention of the earliest specific name as obligatory under the law of priority.

But, if what the author of the argument deems rationally out of the question be not only possible but defensible; if the affirmative answer to one of the questions does not necessarily involve the negation of the other; if both *bullata* and *Carex bullata* are names of a certain sedge, then the argument, so specious at first glance, is weakened, if not invalidated. And I shall venture to assert, having in mind the continual practice of all botanists, that, under certain limitations, *bullata* alone is the entirely sufficient name of a sedge. Professor Bailey will not dissent from such a proposition as this, that he could lecture for an hour, or for five hours, upon a certain group of sedges, discussing, the while, any number of species from a half-dozen to several hundreds, without any chance of indefiniteness or ambiguity as to the plants, and all this without using any but the specific names; never once, by any necessity of the situation, employing before his hearers the generic term *Carex*. Nor is this instance merely a supposititious one; precisely this usage being so exceedingly common that any botanist, at least upon a moment's reflection, must realize the universal prevalence of it. We do not, as a rule, make extensive use of anything but the specific names, in oral converse, no matter what the genus under consideration may be, unless it should be a monotypic one, in which

<sup>1</sup>BOT. GAZETTE 16: 215.